

To University of Alaska Fairbanks

FRANK P. CHRISTOPHEL

I was born at Elk Grove, Sacramento County, May 11, 1868, when Old Elk Grove on the upper Stockton Road was the stopping and changing place for horses on the Stage Line between Sacramento and Stockton.

There were quite a number of Indians left on the Consumnes River between Hicksville and Ione, but they were well civilized and traded at my father's store at Old Elk Grove.

I went to school until I was thirteen years old, then went to work on ranches for several years. At the age of nineteen, I went to Sutter County breaking mules with a single line. Drove first combined harvester in Sutter County for J. R. Williams with eighteen mules, worked on thrashing machines as Forker, Fireman on Engine; also, Sack Sewer. Sewed seventeen hundred sacks of Barley in one day on a bet--and won.

Came back to Sacramento County as a fireman on a large ranch for two years. Rented ten head of horses to Street Car Company during Fair time; drove eight mules with jerk-line on one trip with the Pioneer Assn. on the street car out to the Fair Grounds at 20th and H Streets. (Old Fair Grounds.) The street car company bought 200 head of wild unbroken horses from Shasta County, and hired me to help break them. I then went to work as grocery wagon driver for five years for Ehman and Company, at 11th & J Streets. Moved next door to Mohr and Yoerk Brothers and drove delivery wagon for them for five years. While at Mohr and Yoerks, I married Pauline Schoenbackler. Left Sacramento for the Klondike Gold Rush with A. Harbinson, S. Harbinson, P. Golden, and D. McShane. Went to Seattle by train, then to Vancouver by boat. Bought our supplies from the Hudson Bay Company, then left by boat for Skagway. While waiting at Skagway to move our freight over the summit, Soapy Smith, a Gambler, was shot and killed by a U. S. Marshall at the wharf. Moved all our freight by sled over the summit, which took us over a month as we could only move about ten

miles a day. We sledged over Lake Linderman to Lake La Barge when the ice began to break, so we cut down trees and whip-sawed our lumber to build a large boat, as we had four tons of supplies. When the ice was almost gone, we started down thirty miles of River, which was a very dangerous proposition. Then down the Yukon River to White Horse Rapids. There we saw about three thousand boats tied to the bank on both sides of the pass. These people tied their boats up and went down to take a look at the River. ~~Went down to take a look at the River--~~ It was only about sixty feet wide and full of large rocks and about three-quarters of a mile long. Some of the people tied canvas over their boats and turned them loose, taking a chance of hitting a rock and busting their boat to pieces and losing everything. We decided to take our boat through, so we took the chance, and made it. After that, lots of folks asked us to take their boats through. We did that for three or four days, and charged them from Twenty-five to Fifty Dollars, according to the size of boat. It took about three minutes to go through, or pack your supplies over the hill, which took about four days packing on your backs. We had a chance to make quite a lot of money there, but the boys wanted to move along, so down the Yukon River we went for about four or five days, till we came to a little river coming out of the mountains. The boys wanted to go up that stream to prospect, so we drew straws to see who would stay in Camp and watch our supplies. I got the short straw, so I stayed along. The boys were gone about ten days. While they were away I took a walk one morning over the hill from where I was camped to look around. I ran into an Indian Camp of about 1000. They were harmless, but nevertheless I was scared. A couple of them followed me back to my camp to see what I was doing. I gave them syrup, tea, and sugar. Well, they came down every day and brought me trout and caraboo steaks, till the boys of my crowd came back. We proceeded down the river to Fort Selkirk, where we again camped to

go prospecting up the Pelly River. We again drew straws to see who would stay in camp. I again got the short one. This time they were gone about two weeks, and came back to get more supplies to make a trip farther inland. But I decided that I was going in to Dawson, where I knew there was gold. Well, we argued for two or three days more, then P. Golden decided to go with me. We divided our supplies, and everything we had. When we came to the boat, we lost that; also the tent. We got the stove and the medicine chest, and the saw and most of the tools. We were just starting to build another boat when a larger boat came by with only two men aboard. The rest of their crew had become discouraged, and decided to go back home. They could not manage their boat very well, so they were glad to take us in to Dawson--about 150 miles farther on. There were lots of "falling-out" with the different parties as hardships were terrible, and lots of them quarrelled and divided up. I saw one party of five who decided to split, but neither side would give in, so they sawed their boat in two, and alot of queer things. We finally arrived in Dawson, tied up our boat and looked around. The parties we came in with decided to go on, so Golden and myself stayed. A man, whose name I have forgotten, landed in Dawson about the same day we did, looked around and saw that there was no glass in the cabins, only a piece of white cloth to let the light in, so ~~he~~^{he} immediately turned around and went back to Seattle and brought a lot of small glass, 8 by 12 inches, back and sold it for \$5.00 a piece. After a few days I ran into the American consul. He asked me to sign as an American Citizen. Most everybody was afraid to sign because if you were an American Citizen, you could not get the advantages of taking up a claim so easy. The American Consul stood in with the Mounted Police, so he took up a lot of claims; so he gave me one on two different creeks, as he could only hold one. As it was in July, I could not work the ground until it

froze up. I began to look around for a job.

The Standard Oil Co. had two steamers come up the Yukon River loaded with Coaloil. They unloaded on the Bank of the River and hired me to watch it at \$20.00 per day. I sold Coal-oil for the Company at night at \$5.00 per can. They finally built a warehouse so I had to look for something else.

When I first landed, there was a shortage of Tobacco and Hams. I sold my smoking Tobacco that cost me Fifty cents a plug outside for Two and Three Dollars per plug. Also, sold my hams for \$25.00 each. When the steamers began to arrive in Dawson everything went down again. Later on, I saw there was going to be a shortage of butter for the winter, so I bought butter at \$1.00 per can. After I got several hundred cans, the Mounted Police stopped me for making a corner, so I sold my butter out at \$2.00 per can.

Then I bought a dog team, and started to haul freight to the Mines. Scotty Allen also had dog teams out of Dawson. A friend of mine--a butcher in Dawson--said he would supply meat to me if I wanted to open a shop out on Eldorado Creek, so I took him up on the proposition. He charged me Fifty cents a pound delivered at the mines. I retailed it out for \$1.00 per pound. Everything went. I was doing fine, and was paying \$75.00 per month rent for a 10 x 12 space in a miner's cabin. I could only get meat three days a week, so I started to build my own shop and save the \$75.00 per month. I got the cabin six logs high, when one of the top logs fell on me, and fastened me down so I could not get up. After I had lain there six hours, the miners missed me and came up to the cabin to see what was the matter. They took me to the Sisters Hospital where they charged me \$50.00 per day; also one ounce of gold dust, or \$16.00 for a quart of milk. The sisters were very nice to me. If you had money, they charged you accordingly, if you were broke, they took care of you just the same. As I was unable to

work on my claim, I turned it over to my partner, who agreed to do the work on it, and if he made something out of it he would divide with my wife, if I did not get well. The doctors wanted to take my leg off, so I decided to come outside until I got better, but the last steamer had left Dawson a week before, so I hired a man at \$30.00 per day to drive my dog team, till we caught up with the steamer which was having trouble with the ice. When I caught up with the steamer, they would not let me take my dog team aboard so I gave the \$600.00 dog team to the man and he started back to Dawson. I heard he got lost in a fierce snow storm and lost his life. The dog team finally went to a Mounted Police Station. Two men died on the way out and we buried them along side the river, and let their folks know about it when we landed in Seattle.

My partner did not work the claim so two Swedes jumped it in the spring, and held it awhile, then sold it for \$60,000.00.

Came back to Sacramento, opened a Saloon at 9th & K Streets, sold out after a year. Bought the old Turner Hall Saloon, held that for awhile, then sold it--did not like the game. ~~Created the~~

Worked for the City of Sacramento as water inspector for a short while.

Spent some time with the State Motor Vehicle in its early days. Left the State for for an appointment as custodian of the County Hall of Records. While fulfilling those duties gave some volunteer service assisting the then County Treasurer

Mr. M. J. Curtis. Curtis soon appointed me his Chief Deputy.

Things progressed for a few years, then upon the death of Curtis, a former Mayor of the City of Sacramento was selected by the Board of Supervisors to the treasurership vacancy,

My position was immediately given to the then District Attorney's son by the same Board.

The Primary Election was held in August 1914. I ran for the position. Two other candidates were in the contest and I won by a huge majority.

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